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PAGE 01 BEIJIN 28435 01 OF 03 021035Z
ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	COPY-01	ADS-00	INR-10	SS-00	SCL-01	CIAE-00
	DODE-00	H-01	NSC-01	NSAE-00	HA-08	L-03	PM-10
	AIT-02	PA-01	ED-04	OMB-01	USIE-00	SP-02	SNP-01
	PRS-01	DS-08	SPD-01	SCT-04	/060 W		

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R 021024Z DEC 85
FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3151
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AIT TAIPEI
AMCONSUL SHANGHAI
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AMCONSUL CHENGDU
AMEMBASSY SEOUL
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
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AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BEIJING 28435

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
TAGS: PGOV, CH
SUBJECT: STUDENT DISCONTENT -- MOVING TOWARD
DECEMBER 9

REF.: (A) GUANGZHOU 3964; (B) BEIJING 26824;
(C) BEIJING 27745; (D) BEIJING 27939; (E) FBIS OW211205;

1. C - ENTIRE TEXT.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BEIJIN 28435 01 OF 03 021035Z

2. SUMMARY. THE OFFICIAL DECEMBER GAMEPLAN FOR STUDENTS, NO DOUBT REINFORCED BY THE STUDENT DEMONSTRATION NOVEMBER 20, APPEARS TO BE TO KEEP THEM SO BUSY WITH A PROGRAM OF APPROVED ACTIVITIES THAT NO TIME IS LEFT FOR ANYTHING ELSE. IN ADDITION, THE AUTHORITIES ARE USING VARIOUS METHODS, INCLUDING DIALOGUE AND A STUDENT INVESTIGATIVE VISIT TO THE BAOSHAN STEELWORKS NEAR SHANGHAI, TO NEUTRALIZE STUDENT SUSPICIONS AND COMPLAINTS. THE MAJOR SCHEDULED

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE Page - 1

REVIEW AUTHORITY: ROBERT J. MARTENS
DATE/CASE ID: 25 NOV 1998 199502887

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POLITICAL EVENT FOR DECEMBER CONTINUES TO BE A RALLY TO BE HELD THE AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 8. THERE ARE REPORTS OF DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE AUTHORITIES AND STUDENTS OVER THE VENUE FOR THE RALLY; THE STUDENTS WANT IT IN TIANANMEN SQUARE, WHILE THE AUTHORITIES WANT TO HOLD IT INDOORS. WHILE THE OFFICIAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE STUDENTS CONTINUES TO BE TO TREAT THEM GENTLY, THERE HAVE BEEN GLIMPSES OF STEEL BENEATH THE VELVET GLOVE: 23 STUDENTS HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE NOVEMBER 20 DEMONSTRATION, AND A JAPANESE PRESS REPORT CLAIMED THAT 100 STUDENTS WERE ARRESTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE SEPTEMBER DEMONSTRATIONS. THE REMARKABLE THING ABOUT ALL THIS IS THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE COMMUNIST PARTY IS ACTING AS THOUGH IT HAS LOST THE INITIATIVE ON CAMPUS; IT IS NOT SO MUCH A QUESTION OF LACKING THE MEANS TO CONTROL AS IT IS A QUESTION OF ACTING AS THOUGH IT LACKED THE CAPACITY TO LEAD. ALTHOUGH THERE IS NOW AN EXTENSIVE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN UNDERWAY, UTILIZING THE MASSIVE APPARATUS AVAILABLE TO THE STATE, THERE IS A REAL QUESTION AS TO ITS EFFECTIVENESS. END SUMMARY.

3. FOLLOWING TWO STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS IN THREE MONTHS AT TIANANMEN SQUARE, THE AUTHORITIES ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BEIJIN 28435 01 OF 03 021035Z

WORKING HARD TO KEEP STUDENTS OFF THE STREETS IN DECEMBER. A NUMBER OF PATRIOTIC ACTIVITIES AND CONTESTS ARE BEING ORGANIZED AT BEIJING UNIVERSITY UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYES OF THE UNIVERSITY'S COMMUNIST PARTY COMMITTEE AND ASSISTED BY AN OUTSIDE PANEL WHICH INCLUDES FORMER FOREIGN MINISTER HUANG HUA. A MAJOR MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM SIXTEEN UNIVERSITIES OF VETERANS OF ANTI-JAPANESE ACTIVITY IN THE WORLD WAR II ERA WAS HELD IN BEIJING NOVEMBER 23-27. THE THEMES STRUCK BY VICE PREMIER LI PENG, CENTRAL ADVISORY COMMISSION VICE CHAIRMAN BO YIBO, FORMER AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S. ZHANG WENJIN AND OTHERS, WERE FAMILIAR: A CALL ON STUDENTS TO PROMOTE REVOLUTIONARY TRADITIONS IN REFORM AND THE FOUR MODERNIZATIONS; PATRIOTIC APPEALS; AND APPEALS TO RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF PARTY LEADERSHIP. IN THE ONLY PUBLISHED REFERENCE TO STUDENT COMPLAINTS, A SPEAKER AT THE MEETING SAID, "UNIVERSITIES OUGHT TO SUPPORT THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP, SUPPORT THE SOCIALIST DIRECTION, AND PROMOTE A DEMOCRATIC STYLE OF STUDY, BUT THIS TYPE OF DEMOCRACY SHOULD BE SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY."

4. ASIDE FROM THE DIALOGUE CAMPAIGN, REPORTED EARLIER (REF B), THE AUTHORITIES RECENTLY ORGANIZED A STUDENT INVESTIGATIVE TRIP TO THE BAOSHAN STEEL

CONFIDENTIAL

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1

COMPLEX NEAR SHANGHAI. ACCORDING TO A REPORT IN THE NOVEMBER 20 PEOPLE'S DAILY, ONE OF THE GROUP'S INVESTIGATIVE TOPICS WAS: "WHETHER WE SUFFERED GREAT LOSSES AS A RESULT OF AN UNFAIR, UNFRIENDLY, AND IRRESPONSIBLE ATTITUDE BY THE JAPANESE DURING THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS, WITH THE EXPENDITURE OF MORE THAN TEN BILLION RMB TO PURCHASE A PILE OF SCRAP IRON?" REPORTING AFTERWARDS TO THE BEIJING MUNICIPAL

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 BEIJIN 28435 02 OF 03 021039Z
ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	COPY-01	ADS-00	NR-10	SS-00	SCL-01	CIAE-00
	DODE-00	H-01	NSC-01	NSAE-00	HA-08	L-03	PM-10
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	PRS-01	DS-08	SPD-01	SCT-04	/060 W		

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R 021024Z DEC 85
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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 BEIJING 28435

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1

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PARTY COMMITTEE, THE STUDENT INVESTIGATORS NOTED THE FOLLOWING RESPONSES TO THEIR INQUIRIES:

-- THE DECISION TO BUILD THE PLANT HAD BEEN MADE BEFORE THE 1979 THIRD PLENUM AT A TIME WHEN ECONOMIC RECOVERY DEMANDED LOTS OF STEEL;
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BEIJIN 28435 02 OF 03 021039Z

-- CHINA HAD BEEN A CLOSED SOCIETY, IT HAD LACKED INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE;

-- HOWEVER, THE STUDENTS ALSO SAID THEY GENERALLY AGREED THAT BAOSHAN SHOULD NOT BE STRICTLY JUDGED ACCORDING TO THE BOTTOM LINE RATE OF RETURN, BUT THE EXPERIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND TRAINED PERSONNEL THAT WILL FLOW FROM BAOSHAN ARE ALL UNQUANTIFIABLE BENEFITS. (COMMENT. THE REPORTED RESPONSES ARE ENLIGHTENING FOR THEY SHOW THAT ONE RESPONSE TO STUDENT ENQUIRIES WAS TO BLAME IT ON THE PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION -- A TACTIC NOT UNKNOWN IN U.S. POLITICS. THE STATEMENT ABOUT LACK OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IS ONLY A MILDLY CAMOUFLAGED WAY OF SAYING THAT CHINA DID SUFFER AT JAPANESE HANDS; BUT IT IS ALSO A DEFENSE OF THE OPENING TO THE OUTSIDE -- WITH MORE EXPERIENCE WE WOULDN'T HAVE MADE THIS MISTAKE. END COMMENT.)

5. IN ADDITION TO HORTATORY APPEALS TO STUDENTS TO ACCEPT PARTY LEADERSHIP, AND STEPS, SUCH AS THE BAOSHAN VISIT TO DEAL WITH STUDENT COMPLAINTS, THERE IS SOME EVIDENCE THAT THE AUTHORITIES ARE BEGINNING TO COME TO GRIPS WITH A MORE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM: STUDENT ALIENATION -- CHARACTERIZED BY A DISINTEREST IN "POLITICS"--AND A GREATER INTEREST IN MATERIAL CONCERNS. THE GUANGMING DAILY, FOR EXAMPLE, RECENTLY CARRIED AN ARTICLE BY A UNIVERSITY TEACHER ON HOW TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF STUDENT DISINTEREST IN THE STUDY OF POLITICAL ECONOMICS. PART OF THE PROBLEM HE SAID, IS THE EMPHASIS BY TEACHERS ON THE CLASS NATURE OF MARXISM-LENINISM WHILE IGNORING DEVELOPMENTS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BEIJIN 28435 02 OF 03 021039Z

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
CONFIDENTIAL

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DOC_NUMBER: 85BEIJIN28435

CHANNEL: n/a

1

SUCH AS POST WORLD WAR II RISE TO PROSPERITY OF CAPITALIST COUNTRIES. ANOTHER PART OF THE PROBLEM, HE SAID, IS FOSSILIZED ATTITUDES OF OLDER TEACHERS. TEACHING SOCIALISM TO STUDENTS WHO LIVE IN A SOCIALIST COUNTRY MUST BE DONE CAREFULLY OR ELSE STUDENTS WILL THINK YOU "ARE TELLING LIES". TEACHERS HAVE DEALT WITH THIS PROBLEM IN THE PAST BY SPEAKING IN ABSTRACT TERMS, BUT THIS IS NOT EFFECTIVE WITH STUDENTS. THE REAL PROBLEMS OF A SOCIALIST SOCIETY, HE ARGUED, SUCH AS ECONOMIC INEFFICIENCY, MUST BE DISCUSSED.

6. THE AUTHORITIES HAVE ALSO BEGUN TO USE MORE FORCEFUL METHODS TO CONTROL AND INTIMIDATE STUDENTS. AN UNCONFIRMED KYODO REPORT (REF E) CITES CHINESE SOURCES AS STATING THAT "AT LEAST 100" STUDENTS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SEPTEMBER DEMONSTRATIONS WERE ARRESTED. WE HAVE HEARD FROM A CREDIBLE SOURCE (REF C) OF THE ARREST OF 23 STUDENTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE NOVEMBER 20 DEMONSTRATION.

7. THE KEY DATE FOR DECEMBER REMAINS THE NINTH. DECEMBER 1, THE FIRST OF THE ADVERTISED (REF B) "SIGNIFICANT DATES" HAS PASSED WITHOUT INCIDENT. THERE ARE REPORTS THAT THE MAJOR RALLY SCHEDULED FOR THE AFTERNOON OF DECEMBER 8 (REF B) HAS BECOME A SOURCE OF CONTENTION BETWEEN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND THE AUTHORITIES. THE STUDENTS, IT IS SAID, WOULD LIKE THE RALLY TO BE HELD IN TIANANMEN SQUARE ON THE GROUNDS THAT IT IS APPROPRIATE BECAUSE THAT WAS WHERE THE DEMONSTRATIONS OF 1935 BEGAN; THE AUTHORITIES REPORTEDLY ARGUE FOR AN INDOOR RALLY, POSSIBLY AT THE GREAT HALL OF THE PEOPLE, TOGETHER WITH OTHER INDOOR OBSERVANCES ON UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 01 BEIJIN 28435 03 OF 03 021036Z
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R 021004Z DEC 85

FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING

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INFO A

MCONSUL HONG KONG

AIT TAIPEI

AMCONSUL SHANGHAI

AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU

AMCONSUL CHENGDU

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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8. COMMENT. THE REMARKABLE THING ABOUT ALL THESE DEVELOPMENTS IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE PARTY IS ACTING AS THOUGH IT HAS LOST THE INITIATIVE IN DEALING WITH STUDENTS. THERE SEEMS TO BE NOT A LITTLE STUDENT ALIENATION, FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED AS A LACK OF INTEREST IN "POLITICS," MEANING OFFICIALLY APPROVED

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02

BEIJIN 28435 03 OF 03 021036Z

POLITICAL ACTIVITY. THE STUDENTS THEMSELVES DON'T SEEM TO BE HEADED IN ANY PARTICULAR DIRECTION AT THE MOMENT. THE AUTHORITIES CERTAINLY HAVE THE MEANS TO CONTROL THE STUDENTS, AS WELL AS CONTROL OF THE MASSIVE PROPAGANDA APPARATUS NOW BEING UTILIZED TO ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE STUDENTS TO FOLLOW THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP. BUT THE QUESTION REMAINS OF HOW MANY STUDENTS, INURED BY A LIFETIME OF EXPOSURE TO PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS, WILL BE PERSUADED. CONTROL HAS NEVER BEEN IN DOUBT; THE AUTHORITIES SEEM TO BE SHOWING SOME DOUBTS ABOUT THEIR CAPACITY TO LEAD. JOHNSON.